THE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

POR JAIRO EDUARDO SOTO MOLINA[1], ÁLVARORAMÓN
GARCÍA BURGOS[2] & DIEGO ALBERTO GARCÍA BURGOS[3]

[1]Master in Education, University of Antioquia, Antioquia, Colombia, Universidad del Atlántico-Barrnaquilla, Colombia

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Human Sciences, University of Zulia, Maracaibo, Venezuela

[2]Master in Literature, Caro and Cuervo Institute, Universidad del Atlántico-Barrnaquilla, Colombia

[2]Research Scholar, Atlantic University, Virginia, United States, Universidad del Atlántico-Barrnaquilla, Colombia

[3]Master in Philosophy and Letters, Complutense University of Madrid, Universidad del Atlántico-Barrnaquilla, Colombia

[3]Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy and Letters, Complutense University of Madrid,

Madrid, Universidad del Atlántico-Barrnaquilla, Colombia

ABSTRACT

Through an ethno methodological work the students intends to understand and produce the social order in which they are immerse. Ethno methodology offered us methods to produce accounts of student´s techniques for negotiating everyday situations in which mediate a cultural meaning or interpretation. Cultural anthropologists (cf. (Hofstede, 2001)), cross-cultural and social psychologists (cf. (Berry, 2001),(Morris, (1979).), (Abbe, 2007). and sociolinguists (cf. (Scollon, 2001)). who have researched children's intercultural experiences are present in this article with their theoretical contributions for solving the problematic situation. The results of the study are used to build intercultural awareness in the students' performance. This has been a relevant achievement and a big impact upon the way of communicating between youngsters in cross cultural settings.

KEYWORDS: Intercultural Awareness, Intercultural Competence, Bilingualism, Intercultural Studies, Interculturality

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'intercultural competence', which has become indispensable within language teaching, as well as being widespread in other subjects - and in society in general. It is one of the modern concepts that have become widely used nowadays, with everyone using it for their own particular purposes. In the past twenty years, intercultural communication has been studied by the researchers from different disciplines: cultural anthropologists (cf. (Hofstede, 2001)), cross-cultural and social psychologists (cf. (Berry, 2001)and sociolinguists (cf. (Scollon, 2001)). However, very few studies have researched children's intercultural experiences and their development of intercultural communicative competence (cf (Swail, 2003).).As an introduction to the topic, we would like to present some of the considerations as the concept can be understood in our specific context.

(Fantini, 2005)States that the intercultural contact between two language speakers provides an excellent opportunity to promote the development of an intercultural competence (IC). As the process is initiated the development of an intercultural competence usually implies a continuous and prolonged process, sometimes, even with periods of regression or stagnation, but even more with positive results and without an end. The individuals involved in the process, bring with them different goals and motivations to the intercultural experience as a result of their varying levels of

competence in the target culture. For some of them, a goal might be o achieve a native like behavior; for others, it may be to gain acceptance in the host culture; while others, just look for surviving by them to be understood in the new language.

When a female student with a Colombian background meets a female student with a Japanese background, there is of course a need for intercultural competence on both sides - no matter what language they are using. This does not mean that the Colombian student tries to behave in a "Japanese" way and the Japanese student in a "Colombian" way - for what could that no lead to in the way of astonishment and doubt? They behave in such a way that both are in a position to accommodate the other person's 'otherness' and to adopt a constructive and knowledgeable attitude towards it.

(Karen-Margrete Frederiksen, 2000) quotes: "First, intercultural competence is a question of openness to differences and knowledge of its historical context. It's not about pretending to be someone who one really is".

In many situations, there will be quite a considerable difference between the Colombian and the Japanese as regards perspectives and ways of doing things, even if they have roughly the same social status and are of the same sex. How much more complex will the situation not become if we bring different social groups together, e.g. a Colombian female student and a Japanese male financier? The point is that the social differences can be at least as important in a cultural respect as the national-cultural. Communication between social groups also calls for intercultural competence.

This article is based on a research study that was carried out with youngsters that had an intercultural experience with at least another native speaker of a different language from Spanish. 25 bilingual students with at least C1 level are studied in three different types of interchanges in intercultural situations: (Spanish- English, Spanish- Italian, and Spanish-German), the first group 15, the second and third 5 each. This study was titled the so called bilingualism at the bilingual schools in Barranquilla.

At first we could say that intercultural competence is the ability of successful communication with people from different cultures. This ability can be acquired in someone at a young age. Earlier experiences are considered, free from prejudices; there is an interest and motivation to continue learning. Intercultural competence can also be learned, developed and improved. The bases for a successful intercultural communication are emotional competence together with intercultural sensitivity. A person who is interculturally competent interacts and understands people from foreign cultures, their specific concepts in perception, thinking, feeling and acting.

Another term recently introduced by researchers is Cross-cultural competence; this term has been used for inter-cultural competence. Interculturality itself has generated its own share of contradictory and confusing definitions, due to the wide variety of academic approaches and professional fields attempting to explain it for their own ends. One author identified no fewer than eleven different terms with some equivalence to intercultural competence: cultural savvy, astuteness, appreciation, literacy or fluency, adaptability, terrain, expertise, competency, awareness, intelligence, and understanding ((Selmeski, 2007)).

As part of a larger research project that examines the short-term and long-term impact of children's experiencein a multi-cultural summer camp on their intercultural communicative competence. This study was carried out by (Zhu, 2011), University of London, United Kingdom under the title: *Children's Intercultural Interactions at an International Summer Camp. The research* seeks to address the research question that what communicative strategies children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds use to communicate with each other when there is disparity in the proficiency of their shared language (in this case, English).

Naturally occurring child-child and child-adult interaction data was videotaped in an international children's summer camp held in UK. The camp participants, 40 children in total and aged11, came from 10 different countries including Japan, UK, Jordan, Philippines, U.S.A., Netherlands, Portugal, Norway, Spain and Germany. In this paper the researchers focus on the children's multi-party interactions in the games and activities organized by the camp. The analysis of the data shows that children employ a range of communicative strategies (e.g. code-switching, gestures, translation) to understand the rules of the activities and negotiate and achieve agreement on action despite the diversity in their language and intercultural competence. Meanwhile, the authors conclude that multi-modality is an important feature in children's intercultural interactions ((Goodwin, 2002)). Furthermore, this study sheds some light on how children negotiate and construct their roles and identities during their interactions in the multi-cultural setting.

On the other hand, the U.S. Army Research Institute, which is currently engaged in a study of the phenomenon, defines intercultural competence as: "A set of cognitive, behavioral, and affective/motivational components that enable individuals to adapt effectively in intercultural environments" (Abbe et al., 2007). Cross-cultural competence does not operate in a vacuum, however. One theoretical construct posits that intercultural competence, language proficiency, and regional knowledge are distinct skills that are inextricably linked, but to varying degrees depending on the context in which they are employed. In educational settings, Bloom's affective and cognitive taxonomies ((Bloom, 1956)((Bloom B. S., 1973)) serve as an effective framework to describe the overlap area between the three disciplines: at the receiving and knowledge levels intercultural competence can operate with near independence from language proficiency or regional knowledge, but as one approaches the internalizing and evaluation levels the required overlap area approaches totality.
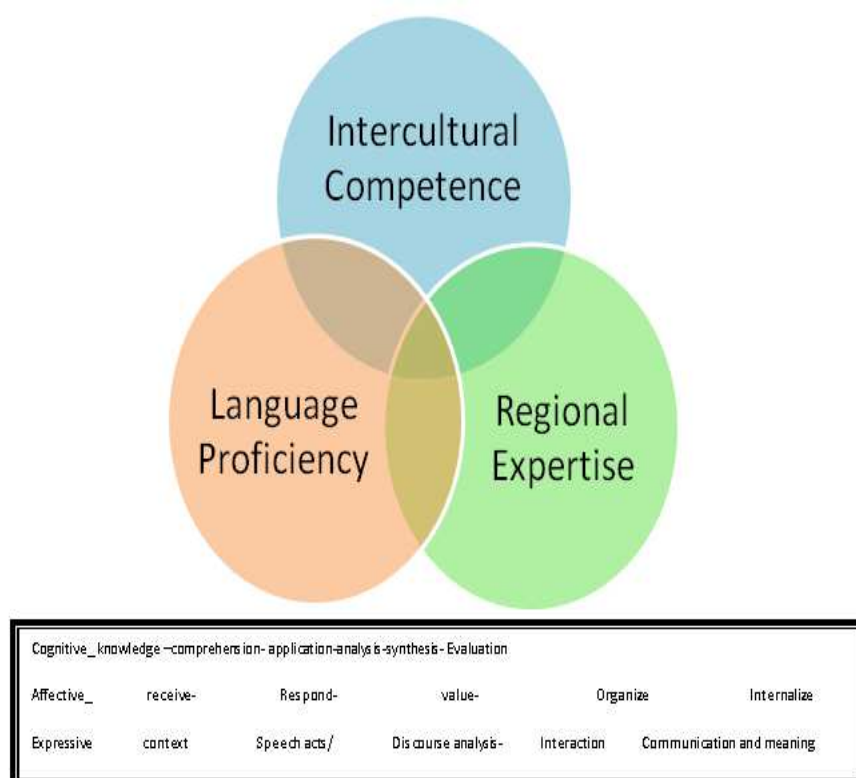

Cognitive_knowledge –comprehension- application-analysis-synthesis- Evaluation					
Affective_	receive-	Respond-	value-	Organize	Internalize
Expressive	context	Speech acts/	Discourse analysis-	Interaction	Communication and meaning

**Figure 1a: Conceptual Framework for the Interaction of Intercultural
Competence Language Proficiency and Regional Expertise**

Adapted from (Abbe, 2007)Here are some typical examples of cultural differences, according to the researched children in our study:

The perception is different and often selective:

- Behavior and gestures are interpreted differently:

- Hence, you must take the time to know how to read faces when conversing with people. However, you must refrain from staring too long because this might cause discomfort on the other person's part.

Facial features reveal the differences in personality, character, strengths or weaknesses of a person. Oftentimes, your current state of mind or feelings is greatly reflected on your face. Permanent lines and features are etched deeply on your face depending on the degree of your emotion. This makes it possible to interpret your feelings and thoughts at a particular moment.

Face readings and interpretations can be subjective; but still, these are supported by scientific studies. Facial features provide you with a better understanding of a person's mind roadmap.

For example, the forehead reveals a person's thinking style. Hence, you might notice that some people have more lines on their foreheads. These lines can be crooked or straight. To some extent, these show how a person thinks. Others argue that deep facial lines are results of inherited genes.

Table 1

Category	Strategic Competence	Strategic Competence	Meaning of the Variable Used or Interpreted
Comprehension	Reading people faces	Staring too long	- Facial features reveal the differences in personality, character, strengths or weaknesses of a person. - Your current state of mind or feelings is greatly reflected on your face. - Permanent lines and features are etched deeply on your face depending on the degree of your emotion.
Responses	Feel comfortable	cause discomfort	- Facial features provide you with a better understanding of a person's mind road map. - the forehead reveals a person's thinking style - You can also learn how to read faces through the eyes and lips

You can also learn how to read faces through the eyes and lips, as they are also expressive features in a person's face. If you can see white between the lower eyelids and the iris, then it signals that the person is worried. And if the white can be seen above of the iris, then it is likely that the person will respond fiercely about the situation. Lastly, lines on the sides of the eyes show someone who often smiles or a generally happy person.

The lips, on the other hand, are a great way to read faces. Fuller or wider lips indicate a person with a relaxed approach in life or someone who likes to talk. Meanwhile, those with thin lips are ones capable of keeping their concentration.

Table 2

Strategic Competence	Odds Ratios

	N=25	N=25	N=35
Facial features reveal the differences in personality, character, strengths or weaknesses of a person.	84.00	80.00	85.71
Your current state of mind or feelings is greatly reflected on your face.	92.00	96.00	97.14
Permanent lines and features are etched deeply on your face depending on the degree of your emotion.	76.00	80.00	80.00
Facial features provide you with a better understanding of a person's mind road map.	92.00	96.00	94.28
the forehead reveals a person's thinking style	80.00	84.00	82.85
You can also learn how to read faces through the eyes and lips	90.00	90.00	91.42

Every feature in your face holds a significant meaning. Therefore, you must take note of the differences on each side of the face. It has been scientifically proven that each side to your face is controlled by either parts of your brain.

The right side of your brain controls the left side of your body, while the left side of your brain controls the right side of your body

The left side of the brain is responsible for logic. Hence, it works like a computer. This logical side is reflective of your professional and external life. The right side of the brain is associated with imagination, intuition, and emotions. Consequently, the left side of the face represents your personal side. Isn't learning how to read faces fun to do?

Create an imaginary line that divides both sides of the face and notice any symmetry. If they are asymmetrical, it reveals that the person have varying perspective in terms of personal and professional life. It is revealed in the difference of details when it comes to the face's lines, eyebrows, cheeks, nostrils, and forehead, among others.

Paralanguage (including body language) has been extensively studied in social psychology. In everyday speech and popular psychology, the term is usually applied forthe considered involuntary body language. Although the difference between voluntary and involuntary body is considered aslanguage tends to be controversial. For example, a smile can be triggered consciously or unconsciously.

This fascinating topicfor language analysts brings a cultural and intercultural huge burden when two languages come into contact.

So when you are interacting with a person, notice the differences in the facial features of each side of their face. A slight change holds significant meaning, whether it is related to a person's professional or personal life.

There are several ways to read and interpret facial expressions or features. However, learning how to read faces remain tricky despite several scientific studies that support it.

Discover how you can decode thoughts and emotions by reading people body language and ethically using mind control

Showing the thumb held upwards in certain parts of the world means "everything's ok", while it is understood in some Islamic countries (as well as Sardinia and Greece) as a rude sexual sign. Additionally, the thumb is held up to signify "one" in France and certain other European countries, where the index finger is used to signify "one" in other cultures ((Morris, (1979).)

- "Everything ok" is shown in western European countries, especially between pilots and divers, with the sign of the thumb and forefinger forming an "O". This sign, especially when fingers are curled, means in Japan "now we may

talk about money", in southern France the contrary ("nothing, without any value"), in Eastern Europe and Russia it is an indecent sexual sign. In Brazil, it is considered rude, especially if performed with the three extended figures shown horizontally to the floor while the other two fingers form an O.

- In the Americas as well as in Arabic countries the pauses between words are usually not too long, while in Japan pauses can give a contradictory sense to the spoken words. Enduring silence is perceived as comfortable in Japan, while in India, Europe and North America it may cause insecurity and embarrassment. Scandinavians, by Western standards, are more tolerant of silent breaks during conversations. ((Abbe, Cross-cultural competence in Army leaders: A conceptual and empirical foundation., 2007)).

- Laughing is connoted in most countries with happiness – in Japan it is often a sign of confusion, insecurity and embarrassment.

- If invited to dinner, in some Asian countries it is well-mannered to leave right after the dinner: the ones who don't leave may indicate they have not eaten enough. In the Indian sub-continent, Europe, South America, and North American countries this is considered rude, indicating that the guest only wanted to eat but wouldn't enjoy the company with the hosts.

- In Mediterranean European countries, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, it is normal, or at least widely tolerated, to arrive half an hour late for a dinner invitation, whereas in Germany and in the United States this would be considered very rude.

- In Africa, Arab cultures, and certain countries in South America[8] (not in Brazil), saying to a female friend one has not seen for a while that she has put on weight means she is physically healthier than before and had a nice holiday, whereas this would be considered an insult in India, Europe, North America and Australia - and Brazil.

- In Africa, avoiding eye contact or looking at the ground when talking to one's parents, an elder, or someone of higher social status is a sign of respect. In contrast, these same actions are signals of deception or shame (on the part of the doer) in North America and most of Europe.

- In Persian and Pakistani culture, if a person offers an item (i.e a drink), it is customary to not instantly accept it. A sort of role play forms with the person offering being refused several times out of politeness before their offering is accepted. This tradition is known as 'tarof' or 'takaluf' which in Persian literally means 'offer'. A similar exchange happens in many East Asian countries.[9]

- In African, South American and Mediterranean cultures, talking and laughing loudly in the streets and public places is widely accepted, whereas in some Asian cultures it is considered rude and may be seen as a mark of self-centeredness or attention-seeking.

- In Italy and Guatemala is common for people in gatherings to say goodbye many times when they leave. For example, someone could say goodbye in the living room and chat for a while. Then say goodbye at the door again, chat a little more, finally saying goodbye in their car's door and then chat a little more until people leave. This behavior is also common in Irish and Irish American gatherings. This act of saying goodbye, then walking to the door to leave only to visit more is commonly called an "Irish Goodbye".

- Different cultures are used to maintaining a different amount of personal space when conversing, and it is even noticeable that Northern Europeans leave each other more space than Southern Europeans. In this example a Northern European who understood the difference would not feel threatened by someone who got closer than usual, interpreting it correctly as normal to the person doing it rather than a deliberate act of aggression.

In this sense we asked the children(from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds) interviewed what communicative strategies they use to communicate with each other when there is disparity in the proficiency of their shared language (in this case, English).

It is a balance, intuitively adapted, between three aspects:

- Knowledge (about other cultures, people, nations, behaviors…),

- Empathy (understanding feelings and needs of other people), and

- Self-confidence (knowing what I want, my strengths and weaknesses, emotional stability

Table 3

Variable	Odds Ratios		
	N=25	N=25	N=35
Knowledge	28.00	24.00	20.00
Empathy	32.00	36.00	28.57
Self-confidence	40.00	40.00	51.42

Basic needs are sensitivity and self-consciousness: the understanding of other behavior and ways of thinking as well as the ability to express one's own point of view in a transparent way with the aim to be understood and respected by staying flexible where this is possible, and being clear where this is necessary.

How children negotiate and construct their roles and identities during their interactions in the multi-cultural settings is another aspect that was covered in this study, and it is comprehended in the following cultural characteristics.

These cultural characteristics can be differentiated between several dimensions and aspects (the ability to perceive them and to cope with them is one of the bases of intercultural competence), such as:

- Collectivist and individualist cultures;

- Masculine and feminine cultures;

- Uncertainty avoidance;

- Power distance;

- Chromatics: Monochrome (time-fixed, "one after the other") and polychrome (many things at the same time, "multi-tasking");

- Structural characteristics: e. g. basic personality, value orientation, experience of time and space, selective perception, nonverbal communication, patterns of behavior.

Some children employ a range of communicative strategies (e.g. code-switching, gestures, translation) to understand the rules of the activities and negotiate and achieve agreement on action despite the diversity in their language and intercultural competence.

Table 4

Variable	Odds Ratios		
	N=25	N=25	N=35
code-switching	36.00	44.00	34.28
gestures	60.00	52.00	57.14
translation	4.00	4.00	8.57

Intercultural Competence Assessment

For assessment of intercultural competence as an existing ability and / or the potential to develop it (with conditions and timeframe), the following characteristics are tested and observed: ambiguity tolerance, openness to contacts, flexibility in behavior, emotional stability, motivation to perform, empathy, metacognitive, polycentrism..

Assessment of intercultural competence is another field rife with controversy. One survey identified eighty-six assessment instruments for intercultural competence (Fantini, 2006). The Army Research Institute study narrowed the list down to ten quantitative instruments for further exploration into their reliability and validity (Abbe et al., 2007). Three examples of quantitative instruments include the [Inter-cultural Development Inventory], the Cultural Intelligence Scale, and the Multi-cultural Personality Questionnaire

Qualitative assessment instruments such as scenario-based assessments are also useful tools to gain insight into inter-cultural competence. These have proven valuable in poorly defined areas such as intercultural competence ((Davis, 1993); (Doll, 1993); (English, 1996); (Palomba, 1999). Research in the area of intercultural competence assessment, while thin, also underscores the value of qualitative instruments in concert with quantitative ones ((Kitsantas, 2004); (1. Lessard-Clouston, 1997); (Lievens, 2003l).

The accompanying intercultural competence and Intercultural awareness are sources of great human richness for bilingualism and intercultural studies. Both terms are discussed through perspectives on the concept of culture and research related to culture in the classroom. The purpose here is to give a view of some of the research on culture and foreign language teaching and learning which may have a direct impact on the instructional process and classroom management in bilingual and ESL settings when we considered to include among the rest of competencies that conform the communicative competence, the intercultural competence and the type of awareness that we need in this type of socio-cultural context of instruction. We concentrate on two areas: cognitive styles, cultural background, and social interaction. In each area we discussed some of the research that has been done.

There are many definitions of bilingualism, some of them incorrect and based on myth. A person does not, for example, have to speak both languages with equal fluency to be a bilingual. It is very common for bilinguals, even those who have been bilingual since birth, to be somewhat "dominant" in one language. Some scholars define bilingualism simply as using two languages on a regular basis. There are other valid definitions of bilingualism.

The term bilingual family is quite simply, a family in which most of the members are bilingual. There are many reasons why a family may choose to be bilingual.

Consecutive bilingualism is known as the process of learning one language after already knowing another. This is the situation for all those who become bilingual as adults, as well as for many who became bilingual earlier in life. Sometimes, it is also called *successive bilingualism.*

Simultaneous bilingualism is referred to the learning process of two languages as "first languages". That is, a person who is a simultaneous bilingual goes from speaking no languages at all directly to speaking two languages. Infants who are exposed to two languages from birth will become simultaneous bilinguals.

Receptive bilingualism is the phenomenon known as being able to understand two languages but express oneself in only one. This is generally not considered "true" bilingualism but is a fairly common situation worth naming here.

CONCLUSIONS

A final consideration for the teachers who are teaching in a bilingual context, consider the importance of training our students on the intercultural competences for the sake of being competitive in this globalized civilization; and also that they will have an intercultural awareness for the language skills do not break down into application of stereotypes of a group of individuals. Because the goal is to promote understanding between groups of individuals that, as a whole, think somewhat differently. It may fail to recognize the specific differences between individuals of any given group. These differences can often be larger than the differences between groups, especially with heterogeneous populations and value systems. But if a speaker of a given language knows the all about of another language speaker´s culture he could talk, interact more freely or negotiate with the ideal hearer.

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